

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

ACDA-05 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02

OPIC-03 CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 SCCT-01 A-01

AGR-05 SAJ-01 EAE-00 OPR-02 /098 W

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R 061119Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3864

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

COMUSMACTHAI

CINCPAC HONO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 23365

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CGEN

SUBJECT: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS OF CONSULAR CONFERENCE IN BANGKOK

OCT 28-29, 1975

SUMMARY: EMBASSY HELD CONSULAR CONFERENCE IN BANGKOK OCT 28-29, ATTENDED BY PRINCIPAL OFFICERS OF CONSULATES IN CHIANG MAI, UDORN, AND SONGKHLA AND BY MISSION PERSONNEL WITH AMBASSADOR PRESIDING. CONSENSUS REACHED DURING DISCUSSION WAS THAT PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION IN THAILAND IS MARKED BY CONSIDERABLE EFFERVESCENCE, BUT THERE IS NO MAJOR BREAKDOWN IN LAW AND ORDER. FORTHCOMING DRY SEASON (NOVEMBER TO APRIL-MAY) COULD SEE SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES, WITH PERIOD NOVEMBER-JANUARY LIKELY TO INDICATE WHICH WAY CAT WILL JUMP. KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT HAS FOLLOWED MIDDLE COURSE IN DOMESTIC AND

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FOREIGN POLICY AND HAS BEGUN TO TURN IN IMPROVED PERFORMANCE.

CONSULS NOTED THAT SECURITY IN THEIR DISTRICTS VARIES CONSIDERABLY AND EMPHASIZED NEED FOR BETTER COMMUNICATIONS WITH MISSION, WHICH WILL BE MET. ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THAILAND IS PROMISING, BUT U.S. BUSINESS INTERESTS APPEAR CONCERNED OVER IMPACT OF POLITICAL SITUATION ON ECONOMY. PRODUCTION OF FOOD LIKELY TO BE HIGHER IN 1975 THAN 1974, BUT MARKET RETURNS MAY BE LESS. MORE DETAILED REPORT ON CONFERENCE TO FOLLOW BY AIRGRAM. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY HELD CONSULAR CONFERENCE IN BANGKOK OCT 28-29, ATTENDED BY PRINCIPAL OFFICERS OF CONSULATES IN CHIANG MAI, UDORN, AND SONGKHLA AND BY COUNTRY TEAM AND OTHER MISSION PERSONNEL, PRESIDED OVER BY AMBASSADOR. CONFERENCE REVIEWED MAJOR ASPECTS OF SITUATION FACING THAILAND AND AFFECTING THAI-U.S. RELATIONS.

2. DISCUSSION BROUGHT OUT FOLLOWING SUMMARY OF POLITICAL SITUATION. PRESENT PERIOD MARKED BY CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL EFFERVESCENCE IN THAILAND. THERE ARE A LOT OF BUBBLES COMING TO SURFACE, POSSIBLY GIVING ESSENTIALLY MISLEADING IMPRESSION THAT COUNTRY IS GOING TO HELL IN A HAND BASKET. IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE AND PROPORTION, KEEPING AWARE OF BASIC FACTS AS THEY DEVELOP. SITUATION IS NOT RPT NOT REALLY MARKED BY ANY MAJOR BREAK-DOWN IN LAW AND ORDER. MISSION REPORTING ON PRESENT PERIOD NEEDS TO STEER CAREFUL COURSE BETWEEN EQUALLY MISTAKEN ALTERNATIVES OF DOWNPLAYING EXISTENCE OF SERIOUS THREAT TO STABILITY OF THAILAND AND REPRESENTING CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AS PORTENDING EARLY CATASTROPHE.

3. THERE IS CONSENSUS THAT DURING FORTHCOMING DRY SEASON RUNNING FROM NOVEMBER TO APRIL-MAY, NORTH VIETNAMESE CAN PUT MORE RESOURCES INTO ASSISTANCE TO INSURGENTS IN NORTHEASTERN THAILAND, BUT IT IS UNLIKELY THEY WILL COMMIT REALLY LARGE QUANTITIES OF WEAPONS OR EQUIPMENT. PERIOD NOVEMBER-JANUARY WILL PROVIDE USEFUL INDICATION AS TO WHICH WAY CAT WILL JUMP. (ANOTHER CONSULAR CONFERENCE WILL BE HELD IN LATE JANUARY AT WHICH REVIEW OF INSURGENCY WILL BE PRINCIPAL SUBJECT.) UP TO NOW, SECURITY SITUATION IN THAILAND IS NOT RPT NOT DETERIORATING RAPIDLY, BUT THERE ARE SHORTCOMINGS  
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IN THAI BODY POLITIC WHICH NEED TO BE REMEDIED. EVENTS IN THAILAND WILL AFFECT MUCH MORE THAN SITUATION IN THIS COUNTRY ALONE.

4. IT WOULD BE MISTAKE TO OVEREMPHASIZE PURELY MILITARY ASPECTS OF INSURGENCY AND TO IGNORE ACTION BEING TAKEN BY KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE RTG PERFORMANCE. THAI MAY NOT HAVE WELL-ARTICULATED, BROADLY-BASED COUNTER-

INSURGENCY PLAN, BUT IN MANY AREAS THEY ARE DOING THE RIGHT THINGS TO DEAL WITH PERCEIVED SHORTCOMINGS IN PAST GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE. FOR EXAMPLE, HEALTH BUDGET FOR 1976 BEING INCREASED BY 70 PERCENT, COMPARED TO LAST YEAR, AND GUARANTEED RICE PRICE PAID TO FARMERS BEING DOUBLED OVER 1973, THOUGH IN LATTER CASE RESULT MUST BE POTENTIALLY PAINFUL CHOICE BETWEEN INCREASING RETAIL RICE PRICE IN BANGKOK OR SUBSIDIZING PRESENT RETAIL PRICES. GOVERNMENT HAS MOVED TO LEGALIZE TRADE UNIONS AND IS SEEKING TO ESTABLISH BUREAU OF LABOR UNDER WHOSE AEGIS GROWTH OF TRADE UNIONS COULD TAKE PLACE. KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT HAS INTRODUCED LEGISLATION PROVIDING FOR ELECTION OF TAMBON (VILLAGE) COUNCILS. THOUGH LEGISLATION REJECTED BY SENATE, THIS ONLY DELAYS MATTERS FOR SIX MONTHS.

5. RTG IS TREATING CURRENT VISIT OF CAMBODIAN DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER IENG SARY AS MATTER OF GREAT IMPORTANCE. FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI IN PARTICULAR IS PREOCCUPIED WITH VISIT. U.S. HAS NO RPT NO OBJECTION TO THAIS AND OTHERS SEEKING TO IMPROVE THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE INDO-CHINESE COMMUNISTS; HOWEVER, THIS TASK WILL NOT BE EASY FOR THAIS, IN PARTICULAR.

6. IN VIEW OF MISSION, TONE OF U.S. RELATIONS WITH THAILAND HAS REMAINED AT BASICALLY SATISFACTORY LEVEL REACHED AFTER FUROR OVER SS MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT DIED DOWN. PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT IS MOVING IN MAIN STREAM OF THAI POLICY, CONCENTRATING ON IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH CHINA; NORMALIZING RELATIONS WITH THAILAND'S COMMUNIST NEIGHBORS; AND SHEDDING SOME AMERICAN BALLAST BUT RETAINING GENERALLY GOOD RELATIONS WITH U.S., ON THE WHOLE. TONE OF U.S.-THAI RELATIONS IS GOOD, AND MOST THAIS APPEAR TO WISH TO RETAIN A GOOD U.S. RELATIONSHIP, PARTICULARLY DURING

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UNCERTAIN TIMES AHEAD.

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

ACDA-05 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02

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R 061119Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3865

INFO AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

COMUSMACHTAI

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7. AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT MISSION HAS RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS FROM WASHINGTON ON NEGOTIATIONS WITH RTG ON RESIDUAL U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND AFTER WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. COMBAT FORCES IN MARCH, 1976. ARRANGEMENTS TO BE REACHED WITH RTG MUST BE STRONG ENOUGH TO WEATHER COMING POLITICAL STORMS. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THAT RTG IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT A CONTINUED AMERICAN NON-COMBAT MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND, PROVIDED THAT THAI CONTROL OVER REMAINING ACTIVITIES DEFINITE AND VIABLE AND OVERALL BENEFIT TO THAI SECURITY IS CLEAR.

8. ECONOMIC SITUATION IS MARKED BY PARADOX. PROSPECTS FOR THAI ECONOMY ARE VERY GOOD, WITH PRODUCTION OF RICE, CORN, SORGHUM, AND SUGAR EXPECTED TO BE NOTABLY HIGHER IN 1975 THAN IN 1974. PROBLEM IS THAT PRODUCTION OF THESE  
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COMMODITIES IS VERY GOOD ELSEWHERE IN WORLD, AND RESULTING THAI MARKET RETURNS MAY NOT BE AS SATISFACTORY AS THAI WOULD WISH. MISSION NOTES LARGE NUMBER OF U.S. BUSINESS VISITORS, MANY OF WHOM CONCERNED, NOT SO MUCH BY ECONOMIC PROSPECTS (WHICH ARE GOOD) BUT BY POLITICAL PROSPECTS WHICH COULD AFFECT ECONOMY. RECENT ECONOMIC TRENDS REPORT PREPARED BY MISSION CONCLUDES THAT THAILAND IS NOT RPT NOT A TEETERING DOMINO. THERE IS COMMUNICATIONS

PROBLEM BETWEEN U.S. FIRMS IN BANGKOK AND THEIR HEAD OFFICES AND, TO AN EXTENT, PERHAPS BETWEEN MISSION AND SOME WASHINGTON AGENCIES WHICH BUSINESS VISITORS TELL US ARE NEGATIVE TOWARD THAILAND. THERE IS NEED TO EMPHASIZE TO WASHINGTON AGENCIES AND TO MAJOR U.S. BUSINESS INTERESTS THE POSITIVE BUT STILL REALISTIC, SIZE OF THE THAI ECONOMY.

9. CONSULS NOTED VARYING NATURE OF INSURGENCY AS SEEN IN RESPECTIVE CONSULAR DISTRICTS. NORTHERN THAILAND IS RELATIVELY QUIET, APART FROM SOME COMMUNIST ACTIVITY IN CHIANG RAI AND NAN PROVINCES AND BURMESE DISSIDENT OPERATIONS, USUALLY ASSOCIATED WITH NARCOTICS TRAFFIC. NORTHEAST THAILAND, AS CENTER OF MAJOR COMMUNIST ACTIVITY, PRESENTS PICTURE OF SURFACE CALM, THOUGH SOME AREAS ARE INCREASINGLY DANGEROUS TO TRAVEL IN, AND AMERICANS RESIDENT IN UDORN CONSULAR DISTRICT ARE PERIODICALLY WARNED ABOUT ROADS WHICH ARE PARTICULARLY HAZARDOUS. CONSULAR DISTRICT OF SONGKHLA IS IN BAD SHAPE AND PROBABLY GETTING WORSE, FROM POINT OF VIEW OF TRAVEL, WITH MISCELLANY OF COMMUNIST TERRORISTS (BOTH MALAYSIAN AND THAI VARIETY), MUSLIM SEPARATISTS, AND OUT AND OUT BANDITS CONTRIBUTING TO DETERIORATION. THAI OFFICIALS, MILITARY AND CIVILIANS, ARE INCREASINGLY FATALISTIC ABOUT DOING ANYTHING ABOUT SITUATION AND SEEM RESIGNED TO CONTINUATION OF PRESENT, ADVERSE CONDITIONS.

10. CONFERENCE BROUGHT OUT PERENNIAL PROBLEM OF IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN MISSION AND CONSULATES, WITH LATTER ASKING PARTICULARLY FOR IMPROVED TRANSMISSION OF KEY REPORTING CABLES WHICH PROVIDE MISSION VIEWS AND GUIDANCE ON MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS. MISSION HAS ARRANGED FOR SUCH CABLES TO BE TRANSMITTED TO CONSULATES TELEGRAPHICALLY. CONSULS ALSO ASKED FOR ADVANCE NOTE OF U.S. VISITORS, CONFIDENTIAL

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BOTH OFFICIAL AND BUSINESS( TO CONSULAR DISTRICTS, AND THIS WILL BE DONE. ADMIN COUNSELOR SOLICITED VIEWS OF CONSULS ON ALL ASPECTS OF SECURITY SITUATION AS IT AFFECTS THEM, INCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS THAT WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR PERSONAL SECURITY.

11. USOM DIRECTOR OUTLINED CHANGING PERSPECTIVES FOR U.S. ECONOMIC AID PROGRAM, WHICH NOW PROVIDES LESS THAN 5 PERCENT OF TOTAL ECONOMIC AID RECEIVED ANNUALLY BY RTG FROM NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SOURCES. U.S. AID TO THAILAND WAS PURGED OF MARGINAL PROJECTS IN 1973-74, WITH PORFOLIO CUT FROM 43 TO ABOUT 10 MAJOR PROJECTS. BASIC CONCEPT IN THIS REDUCTION WAS TO AVOID UNDERTAKING ANYTHING THAT THAIS CAN DO. STAFF CONSOLIDATION WILL CONTINUE, AND USOM

WILL ULTIMATELY MOVE INTO EMBASSY, WITH RESIDUAL  
MONITORING FUNCTION ON REMAINING PROJECTS LOCATED IN  
ECONOMIC SECTION.

12. USIS PROGRAM DISCUSSED, WITH EMPHASIS ON STEPS ALREADY  
TAKEN TO CUT BACK ON SOME OF THE EXTENSIVE EFFORTS OF THE  
PAST FEW YEARS AND CONCENTRATION ON TRADITIONAL USIS FUNCTIONS  
OF SUPPORT FOR U.S. FOREIGN POLICY OBJECTIVES AND  
PRESENTING A PICTURE OF U.S. SOCIETY IN ITS VARIED  
DIMENSIONS. USIS AMERICAN AND LOCAL STAFF HAS BEEN  
CONSIDERABLY PRUNED AND NUMBER OF BRANCHPOSTS CUT  
FROM 13 TO THREE. PLACEMENT OF RADIO PROGRAMS, PRESS  
MATERIAL; USE OF HIGH-QUALITY VTR'S NOW BEING PRODUCED;  
BROAD PROGRAM OF CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS; AND CONTINUED  
USE OF VERY ACTIVE BI-NATIONAL CENTER WILL BE PRINCIPAL  
POINTS OF FOCUS.

13. COMUSMACTHAI BRIEFLY REVIEWED RECENT AND PROSPECTIVE  
CHANGES IN THE SIZE AND FUNCTIONS OF JUSMAG, NOTING THAT  
ITS STRENGTH IS CURRENTLY AROUND 174 SPACES, DOWN FROM  
350 TWO YEARS AGO. THE MAP IS DOWN TO ABOUT \$30 MILLION  
IN 1975 FROM OVER \$100 MILLION IN 1972-73. (FURTHER DETAILS  
IN AIRGRAM.)

14. COMMENT: CONSULAR CONFERENCE IS USEFUL VEHICLE  
FOR ASSESSING RANGE OF ISSUES BEFORE MISSION AND FOR  
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OBTAINING VIEWS OF U.S. OFFICIALS OUTSIDE OF BANGKOK.  
MORE DETAILED REPORT ON CONFERENCE WILL BE FORWARDED BY  
AIRGRAM.  
WHITEHOUSE

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## Message Attributes

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